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SUBJECT: SERBIA: GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES NEW AMBASSADORS SANS AGREEMENT

Summary

1. (SBU) At its weekly session on November 20, the Serbian government (GOS) endorsed the appointment of seven new ambassadors, even though we later learned from MFA contacts that the government had not yet requested agreement for the ambassadors-designate. This lapse of diplomatic protocol may come back to bite the GOS. The appointments generated significant press coverage due to the public profile of two of the appointees, former Politika daily editor-in-chief Ljiljana Smajlovic and former Serbian Ambassador to Washington Milan St. Protic, and it would be embarrassing for the government if agreement is not secured. End Summary.

Courtesy Bios

2. (U) As a courtesy, we would like to provide our colleagues in Bern, Bucharest, Ottawa, Paris, and Warsaw with the following brief biographies for the ambassadors-designate. Biographic information for the additional two appointees, Ivo Viskovic to Berlin and Stanislav Stakic to Rabat, is not yet available and will be forwarded septel.

Canada

Ljiljana Smajlovic
Ambassador of Serbia to Canada

Ljiljana Smajlovic was born in 1956 in Sarajevo. After graduating from the University of Sarajevo Faculty of Political Science, Smajlovic received scholarships to study in Cleveland, Ohio and then in Algeria. She visited the United States on the International Visitors Program in the late 1980's.

In the early 1990s, Smajlovic worked for the Sarajevo daily Oslobodjenje as a reporter from the Vukovar front before moving to Belgrade in 1992.

From 1992-1994, Smajlovic worked for the weekly magazine Vreme. In 1994, she received a fellowship from the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and spent a year in the U.S. as a journalist for the weekly newsmagazine Vreme.

From 1998-1999, Smajlovic worked for Evropljanin magazine. She left Evropljanin following the murder of its editor-in-chief Slavko Curuvija in April 1999 and started writing for the weekly newsmagazine NIN, first as a Hague Tribunal commentator and later as a weekly columnist.

During the early 2000s, Smajlovic worked as Media Advisor for the USAID-funded International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX)

ProMedia Serbia media project.

From October 2005 until October 2008, Smajlovic served as the first female editor-in-chief of the daily newspaper Politika.

She was appointed Ambassador of Serbia to Canada on November 20, 2008.

Smajlovic is considered very close to former Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica of the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS).

She speaks English and French and has one son.

France

Dusan Batakovic
Ambassador of Serbia to France

Dusan Batakovic was born in Belgrade in 1957. He graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Belgrade, gaining bachelor's and master's degrees in history. Batakovic received his PhD in history from the University of Paris - Sorbonne, Paris IV (magna cum laude).

From April 2001 to 2005, Batakovic served as Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (later Serbia and Montenegro) to the Hellenic Republic.

In July 2005, he was appointed an advisor to Serbian President Boris Tadic.

In November 2005, Batakovic represented Tadic's cabinet as a member of the Serbian negotiation team for the future status of Kosovo in Vienna.

From 2005-2007, he served as Director of the Institute for Balkan Studies of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences.

In July 2007, Batakovic was appointed Serbian Ambassador to Canada.

In November 2008, he was appointed Serbian Ambassador to France.

Batakovic is the author of historical monographs on Serbia, Yugoslavia, and the Balkans and a number of studies and articles. He was one of the leaders of the protests organized against the regime of the former President Slobodan Milosevic in the late 1990s.

Batakovic has taught methodology of history and contemporary European and American history at Belgrade University since 1998.

Poland

Radojko Bogojevic
Ambassador of Serbia to Poland

Radojko Bogojevic was born in 1948 in Belgrade. He graduated from the University of Belgrade, Faculty of Political Science.

In 1973, Bogojevic joined the Federal Secretariat for Foreign Affairs (FSFA). From 1976 - 1980, he served as Second Secretary at the Yugoslav Embassy in Guyana and from 1980-1983 he worked for the North American Department of the FSFA.

In 1983, he was appointed First Secretary in the Yugoslav Embassy in Finland. He then served as First Counselor for the FSFA

International Organizations Department from 1987-1989.

From 1989-1992, Bogojevic headed the UK, Ireland and Nordic States Group, West European Department at the FSFA.

From 1992-1998, Bogojevic served as Charge d'affairs in the Yugoslav Embassy in London before receiving an appointment as Director of the Department for the Americas from 1998-2000.

In 2000, he was appointed Director of the Department for Europe and in January 2001, was appointed an assistant to the Foreign Minister.

In 2002, he was named Ambassador to Egypt where he served until 2005 when he became Serbian Ambassador to Sudan.

In 2006, Bogojevic became a State Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

On November 20, 2008, he was appointed Ambassador to Poland.

He speaks English and French. He is married and has two children.

Romania

Zoran S. Popovic

Ambassador of Serbia to Romania

Zoran S. Popovic was born in 1949 in Vrsac, Serbia. He graduated from the University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology. As a student, he spent some time in Moscow.

From 1970-1974, Popovic worked as a journalist at the Tanjug news agency as an international affairs desk officer. He was promoted to international correspondent in 1974 and worked in Cyprus until 1978.

From 1978- 1985, Popovic served as Editor-in-Chief at the "Titograd" radio and TV station. (Titograd is the former name of Podgorica, the capital city of Montenegro.)

From 1985-1987, Popovic worked as Director and Editor-in-Chief of the Montenegrin daily newspaper Pobjeda.

From 1987-1991, he served as Ambassador to Jordan. In 1995, Popovic was appointed Serbia's Ambassador to Syria, where he served until 1999.

Popovic held ambassadorial-level positions with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Belgrade from 1991-1995 and from 1999-2000.

In 2000, Popovic worked for the Belgrade Media Center as a coordinator for the transition of media.

He was appointed Ambassador to Turkey in 2001 where he served until 2005.

In November 2008, he was appointed Ambassador to Romania.

Popovic speaks Arabic, English, and Russian. He is married and has two children.

Switzerland

Milan St. Protic

Ambassador of Serbia to Switzerland

Milan St. Protic (pronounced "suh-tuh pro-tich") was born in 1957 in Belgrade. He graduated from the University of Belgrade, Faculty of Law in 1980. He continued his studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara, where he gained his Masters (1982) and PhD (1987).

After returning to Yugoslavia, Protic worked as a Research Fellow at the Institute for Balkan Studies. He also served as a visiting professor at UC Santa Barbara.

In 1992, St. Protic became active in the movement against the regime of Slobodan Milosevic. He became one of the leading figures of the opposition and a member of its leadership.

In 2000, following the fall of the Milosevic regime, St. Protic was elected Mayor of Belgrade.

In 2001, St. Protic was appointed Ambassador to the United States, but he was recalled six months later after criticizing President Vojislav Kostunica and Foreign Minister Goran Svilanovic and allegedly failing to respect the rules of diplomatic conduct.

On November 20, 2008, St. Protic was appointed Serbian Ambassador to Bern.

St. Protic comes from a very prominent Serbian family. His grandfather was a Serbian statesman and the first Prime Minister of Yugoslavia (1918-1920), who also worked as a head of the Yugoslav Central Bank (1931-1939).

He is married and has three daughters.

Comment

13. (SBU) The failure to seek agreement before announcing these ambassadorial appointments unfortunately is symbolic of a broader lack of professionalism in the MFA. In a recent interview, former Serbian Ambassador to the Vatican and Turkey Darko Tanaskovic spoke about the increasing number of diplomatic gaffes caused by Serbian diplomats' inexperience and ignorance and advocated for a personnel system that would value merit over party or political affiliation. Introducing such a system would begin to address the endemic

deficiencies that afflict the Serbian diplomatic corps and perhaps prevent debacles such as the role played by Serbian Consulate staff in New York in helping fugitive Miladin Kovacevic flee to Serbia.
End Comment.

MUNTER